

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:575
ANSWERED ON:25.07.2001
UNTOUCHABILITY
RAMDAS ATHAWALE

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether entry of Dalits in some temples of the country is still prohibited;
- (b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) whether castism is still prevalent in the country;
- (d) if so, the reasons therefor; and
- (e) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Union Government to eradicate untouchability?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SMT. MANEKA GANDHI)

(a),(b) (c),(d) & (e) As per provision under section 3 of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 any person, preventing others from entering any place of public worship, including temple, which is open to other persons professing the same religion, is liable for punishment not less than one month and also with fine not less than Rupees one hundred. This is a Central Legislation extending to the whole of India.

As a result of enactment of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and other State interventions, the incidence of untouchability is reportedly declining. Number of cases reported to be registered under the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 has gone down from 831 in 1997 to 611 in 1998 and to 526 in 1999.

Following steps are taken to eradicate untouchability:-

(i) Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme, financial assistance is provided to the State Governments on 50:50 basis and to Union Territory Administrations on 100% basis for implementation of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and taking measures such as provision of legal aid, appointment of officers for initiating or exercising supervision over prosecution, setting up of Committees and Special Courts, conducting periodic surveys etc.

(ii) Assistance for holding of Sadhabana Shivirs and incentive for inter caste marriage are also extended for promoting social harmony and removal of untouchability.

(iii) State Governments/UT Administrations have been requested to accord priority to implementation of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and extend required assistance for ensuring that there is no discrimination on the ground of caste.

(iv) State Governments, where pendency of cases, is high have also been requested to setup exclusive Special Courts for expeditious disposal of cases registered under the Act.